

7 TIPS to SELF-PUBLISH FICTION LIKE A PRO



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BOOK PUBLISHING Tip Sheet

7 Tips to Self-Publish Fiction Like a Pro

It seems like everyone is self-publishing a book nowadays. The barrier to entry is so low, and the rewards can be so high (just look at *50 Shades of Grey*, for example)! You may have a manuscript worth self-publishing right now—and not even realize it. Do you have a collection of short stories? A moving romance? A page-turning thriller? Will your historical fiction help readers better understand our past? Could your humorous novel add some laughter to the world? Does your short children’s story need only professional illustrations to be finished?

If you have a fiction manuscript of any kind or are currently working on one, rest assured there is a self-publishing solution for you! And the revolution is in full swing; there is no better time than right now to put your fears behind you and become a published author. As Sally Shields once said after publishing with **Outskirts Press**, “Self-publishing is easy and fun and invigorating and life-changing!”



So, if you’re going to self-publish, let’s make sure you do it like a pro. It helps if you understand the seven core components of a professionally self-published book, why those components are important, and how to approach them as successfully as possible.



TIP #1: Understand Standard Book Elements

Understand standard book elements like barcodes, copyrights, and International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs). High-quality, professional self-published fiction books have all three. Without these, your book won't be accepted into many sales channels—like Barnes & Noble and Walmart—and will be ineligible for book awards.

TIP #2: A Great Book Cover Is Essential

Your book cover is the first element every potential buyer sees—whether they are shopping in a store or on the internet. A professional cover designer can help you make a great cover that is eye-catching and legible in real life and in an online thumbnail. They know how to design a cover that helps your book look like it fits its fiction genre and stands out from the crowd. And they do a lot more than play with images and fonts. Thanks to a pro, your book's spine will be the right size, and all the details book buyers look for (like a barcode) will be in place.

TIP #3: Editing Is a MUST

Every writer needs a professional editor! Hiring one does not take away from your ability as a writer—in fact, doing so is a hallmark of a smart writer who's a real pro. Editors check for grammar and spelling issues but also changes in voice (for example, have you drifted into another character's head when most of your novel is told from one point of view?) and inconsistencies (was your main character born in North Dakota in the first chapter but South Dakota in the seventh?). It's great if you've carefully revised, if your writing group has put your manuscript through its paces, and if you have an English teacher friend who took their red pen to your book. Professional editors want writers to take their manuscripts as far as they can toward perfection—and then the people who edit for a living will help put the finishing touches on it, and you bring it home.

TIP #4: Book Layout and Design Is an Art

The interior of a book may look like a word-processed document, but it's far from that. Professionally published books are printed from book design software, which allows designers to work through the huge checklist they must follow to make a book's interior layout look effortlessly clean and consistent. A professional designer considers leading and kerning, headers and footers, gutters and margins, line breaks and page numbers, among many other minute details that a writer is too busy for . . . because you're busy writing!

TIP #5: Understand Book Pricing

Book pricing is mainly about how the three elements are related: retail price, trade discount, and author profit. For example, it is essential to understand the advantages and disadvantages of a high-trade discount; a low-trade discount can limit your book's availability, whereas a high-trade discount can price your book out of the market. Therefore, striking the perfect balance is vital.

TIP #6: Be Enthusiastic About Your Book

Unless you plan on publishing a book for a very finite number of people (perhaps a few friends and family members), successfully self-published fiction books rely upon the participation and investment of their authors for marketing and promotional efforts. Fortunately, there are many practical (and, in many cases, free) marketing avenues to pursue. Even better, if you lack the time or ability to market the book yourself, your self-publishing company or an independent book publishing firm can take on those tasks for you at various costs.

TIP #7: Earn Royalties and Pay Taxes

Receiving royalties is great, but don't forget to pay your taxes. Yes, self-publishing a book can be exciting and fun; some might even call it addictive! But don't confuse it with a hobby. Publishing a book is a business—even when it is the most imaginative, reality-escaping fiction—so be sure to treat it like one. Once your royalties start coming in, you don't want to receive an unwelcome visit from the IRS.

Important considerations like these are why most self-publishing fiction authors rely upon the professional services of full-service self-publishing companies. Many are available to choose from, and some sites rank them to make your comparisons easier. One such site is **Top Consumer Reviews** at: <https://www.topconsumerreviews.com/self-publishing/>.



Here's to the start of your exciting journey toward being a published author!